SAN FRANCISCO IN HISTORY

Stricken City Long Permeated With an Air of Romance.

IN THE DAYS OF VIGILANTES

How the Metropolis of California Was Purged of Disorder—Lynching of Casey—The Days of the Forty-niners—Town Depopulated by the Rush of Gold Seekers.

SAN FRANCISCO, the earthquake stricken city, has long been permeated with an air of romance and adventure. Nowhere may one turn without being reminded of the legends that have been woven around the forty-niners and their immediate followers. The names of the streets and of the business blocks, such as Kearney, Sutter, Montgomery, Dupont, Flood, Crocker and Sharon, bring to the mind of the visitor long forgotten stories of riot or adventure and of fortunes whose vastness once excited his wonder or made him incredulous.

The site of the city was first visited by Europeans in 1769, and in 1775 Bucareli ordered a fort, presidio and mission founded on the bay. One year later, the year of the Declaration of Independence, the Spanish settlers began the work, and when Vancouver, the explorer, visited the place in 1792 the presidio represented the military authority, while the pueblo and mission stood for the civil and religious factors respectively. The mission was secularized in 1834 and a town laid out the year following.

In 1846 an American man-of-war, under command of Commodore John B. Montgomery, entered the harbor and hoisted the stars and stripes over the town. Mexico, which succeeded Spain as the owner of California, was then at war with the United States, and the act of Commodore Montgomery ended her dominion over San Francisco. Montgomery appointed Lieutenant Washington A. Bartlett to be Frisco's first alcalde, or mayor, under the new regime. Under Spanish and Mexican rule the town was a sleepy, unprogressive place, but with the coming of Americans and the discovery of gold in 1848 there came an era of growth and hustle. This did not eventuate at once, for the first news of the discovery of gold practically depopulated San Francisco.

The town was smitten as by a plague, and one historian thus describes what happened: "Its houses were left unoccupied and unprotected, its former trade ceased, its lots fell to a small part of their value, its two weekly newspapers were suspended, and the town, deserted by the bulk of its inhabitants, was at one time without a single officer clothed with civil authority."

After the first rush to the gold diggings the town began to regain its lost ground, and ere long the influx of gold seekers gave quite an impetus to its growth. The town was incorporated in April, 1840, and the first common council elected proceeded with diligence to plunder the city treasury. The same year the state was admitted to the Union, and when the steamer Oregon brought the news—there was no telegraphic communication in those days—business was entirely suspended and the entire population rushed to the wharfs to welcome the harbinger. The town had about 10,000 inhabitants at that time, and when the people were informed that the signal flags of the Oregon indicated that California was a sovereign state of the United States of America "a universal shout arose from 10,000 voices on the wharfs, in the streets, upon the hills, housetops and the world of shipping in the bay."

In its early history the city suffered from several disastrous fires. Between December, 1849, and June, 1851, six conflagrations played havoc with the growing young town. Better buildings were planned and several fire companies were organized. These were steps in the right direction. It was also discovered that the fires were started by criminals who profited by the confusion.

This fact and the inefficiency and corruption of the city government led a large number of citizens to organize the famous vigilance committee which ruled the place in 1851. Quite a number of crooks were lynched by the committee, others were driven out, like John Oakhurst, the leading figure in Bret Harte's "Outcasts of Poker Flat," and the city went through a purification process that was of great benefit to it.

The aspect of San Francisco at this time was not inspiring to inflowing gold seekers. It was a straggling medley of low, dingy adobes, frail wooden shanties, born in an afternoon, with a sprinkling of more respectable frame houses and a mass of canvas and rubber habitations. It was mainly a city of tents, rising in a crescent upon the shores of the cove. From Clark point it skirted the land to Telegraph hill, along the Clay street slopes, tapering away to the California street ridge. The larger number passed to the southwest shores of the cove, beyond the Market street ridge, a region sheltered from blustering winds and provided with good spring water and named the Happy Valley.

Stockton street, stretching from Sacramento to Green streets, presented the heatest cluster of dwellings, and Powell street was the abode of churches, for of the six churches in existence in the middle of 1850 three graced its sides and two stood upon cross streets, within half a block. Mason street, above it, was really the western limit of the city, as Green street was the northern. Beyond Mason street ran the trail to the Presidio, past scattered cottages, cabins and sheds, amid dairies and gardens, with a branch path to the Marine hospital, on Filbert street, and another to the North Beach anchorage, where speculators were planning a wharf to attract settlement.

After the vigilance committee disbanded the criminal element became bolder, and in 1856 the crime and corruption in the city had become intolerable to those who wished to live a decent and orderly life. When Editor King of the Bulletin, who had denounced the thugs, was murdered by James P. Casey, a new vigilance organization was created, and in a few days Casey and another murderer named Cora were executed in front of the committee's headquarters. Many lawbreakers were later put to death, and the regime of the California "bad man" came to an end.

It has been asserted that San Francisco is the most cosmopolitan city in the world, and by cosmopolitan is meant a population from all parts of the world. Not long ago the records indicated that 43 per cent of the people of the city were born in foreign lands, not in two or three different countries, but in practically every land under the sun. According to the national census reports for 1890, San Francisco had a total population of 298,997. Of these 172,186 were native born and 126,811 were born outside of the United States. Fully half the grown persons in the community removed to California from alien lands, while a large percentage of the other half and of the general body of children were of foreign parentage. In 1900 San Francisco had a population of 342,782, of which 34.1 per cent was foreign born.

San Francisco has long been famed as one of the "wide open" cities of the United States. As in the days of 1849, the gambler devotes himself to his vocation with little interference from the authorities. Prior to the earthquake two of the most prominent corners in the city were occupied by gambling dens. One of them, known as the Cafe Royal, has been a veritable gold mine for its proprietors.

The California supreme court has rendered a decision to the effect that the game of draw poker is not a game of chance, but involves judgment and other elements as well as chance or luck, and because of this decision these places are permitted to be maintained.

They are frequented by a hard looking crowd of men, and many scandals are told associated with these places. A visitor's life is probably safe in these resorts, but his money is not. It is said that the son of the premier of British Columbia was fleeced of $8,500 in the Cafe Royal a few years ago. He lost $1,500 in cash, but stopped payment on $7,000 in checks.

San Francisco has forty-seven square miles of territory, or about 30,000 acres, within the municipal limits. The finest residences are on Nob hill and Pacific heights, both of which districts command magnificent views of the bay and the Golden Gate. The city has six large parks and twenty-two small ones, and Golden Gate park occupies over 1,000 acres.

SAN FRANCISCO HARBOR.

Royal Roads.

People will discover at last that royal roads to anything can no more be laid in iron than they can in dust; that there are, in fact, no royal roads to anywhere worth going to; that if there were it would that instant cease to be worth going to—I mean so far as the things to be obtained are in any way estimable in terms of price, for there are two classes of precious things in the world—those that God gives us for nothing—sun, air and life, both mortal life and immortal, and the secondarily precious things which he gives us for a price. These secondarily precious things, worldly wine and milk, can only be bought for definite money. They never can be cheapened. No cheating nor bargaining will ever get a single thing out of nature's establishment at half price. Do we want to be strong? We must work. To be hungry? We must starve. To be happy? We must be kind. To be wise? We must look and think.—Ruskin.

Lunching In Congress.

Visitors in Washington nearly always call upon the congressman from their district, and the latter, if of hospitable turn, frequently invites them to luncheon in the congress restaurant, a privilege highly prized by the average visitor. Once a number of women called upon a wealthy congressman and were duly invited to have luncheon with him, which they promptly and gladly accepted, and when seated proceeded to order a luncheon substantial enough for day laborers. When the check for the luncheon was handed to the congressman and he handed a bill for the amount to the waiter, one of the women remarked that she thought congressmen did not have to pay for their meals there or she would not have ordered so much. The congressman, say the narrator, explained that paying for luncheons was one of the pleasant privileges which were still permitted to the congressmen by an indulgent government and that it was one which they especially enjoyed. "And visitors help us enjoy it, too," he added.—Baltimore American.

Contagion and Infection.

The terms contagion and infection are too often used promiscuously, though they are by no means synonymous. The dissemination of mycotic diseases takes place in different ways. There are those which cannot be communicated from person to person, but spread only by the microbic cause invading the individual. To this class belong malarial fevers produced by spasmodia. There are, secondly, those which are not communicable from person to person, but through external carriers only, such as soil, water, food, air, clothing and utensils. To that class belong yellow fever and Asiatic cholera. They are infectious. There are, finally, those which may be transmitted directly from a person or indirectly through carriers. To this class belong scarlet fever, measles, diphtheria, variola, influenza, erysipelas and varicella, perhaps also whooping cough. They are contagious and infectious.

Courting Customs of Siam.

In Siam the lighting of a cigar indicates a betrothal. In that country a person wishing to become engaged to the girl of his choice offers her a flower or takes a light from a cigar or cigarette if she happens to have one in her mouth, and thereupon, provided there is no impediment, steps are at once taken to arrange for the payment of the dowry. The families of the bride and bridegroom have each to provide a considerable sum. In Calabria, as in many parts of India, a lighted taper or a lighted pipe betokens the acceptance of the suitor for the hand of a lady in marriage. In Siberia it is the custom that when a suitor has been accepted by a girl she presents him with a box of cigars and a pair of slippers as a sign that he is to be master in the house.

Perfume of Flowers.

It is claimed that the perfume of flowers disappears as soon as the starch in the petals is exhausted, and it may, it is said, be restored by placing the flowers in a solution of sugar, when the formation of starch and the emission of fragrance will be at once resumed.

Encouraging Him.

Mr. Faintart—Miss Brightly, I—aw—that is—Mabel, I—er—desire to—aw—really— Miss Brightly—Keep right on, Mr. Faintart; I'll consider your proposal and have my answer ready by the time you have got it out of your system.—Philadelphia Press.

On Other Nights.

Mr. Goodthing—How does your sister like the engagement ring I gave her, Bobby? Her Young Brother—Well, it's a little too small. She has an awful hard time getting it off when the other fellows call.—Puck.